

**Lisa Crescimano**

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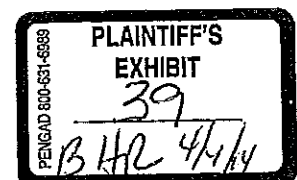
**From:** Jim Gunner [jgunner@me.com]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 27, 2010 8:56 AM  
**To:** Terry Chapman; Terry Chapman; John Reddaway; Matt Kosior; Brian Printy; Steve Schuster  
**Cc:** Lisa Crescimano  
**Subject:** Talking Points  
**Attachments:** Q and A Perkins Smith.doc

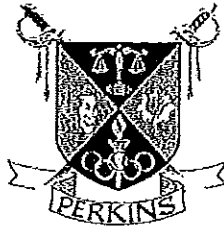
Board,

Attached is a document from a media consultant I am working with on the Carol Smith situation. He has prepared some general talking points and typical Q & A for all of us to use. As Board members, your best response is the fifth bullet - "We are in the middle of a legal process...."

Any questions, let me know. Otherwise, I will fill you in more tomorrow night.

Jim





## Questions and Answers Regarding the Christine Smith Situation

April 27, 2010

This is an internal document – not a public FAQ – designed to assist spokespersons for the district. Answers are suggestions only. Spokespersons should put them into their own words and use the key messages as part of the answer to a given question.

### Key Messages

- Education of students comes first in Perkins District
- The Board and Administration want to ensure effective teaching in every class for every student
- Ms. Carol Smith has been given many chances to improve her teaching performance
- The District acknowledges her many years of good service to students
- We are in the middle of a legal process under state law and can't talk about specific examples or specific statements of students or parents.

- Q. Why does it take so long to dismiss this person? The district has suspended and reprimanded her many times.
- A. Ms. Smith, as does every other teacher with tenure, has certain rights under law and under the agreement with the Perkins Teachers Association. In addition, she has provided the district with years of service, and the district wants to offer her every opportunity to seek assistance with any medical problem.
- Q. Doesn't she deserve more respect than a termination notice?
- A. The district has provided numerous opportunities for her to stay in her position during the past several years. Ms. Smith has received verbal reprimands, unpaid suspensions and reduction in pay since the 2007-08 school year. The district has recommended and made accommodations for any medical issue she might have, and has counseled her on her behavior. The administration and the board regret this difficult, but necessary, action, because she has rendered

**many years of good service. The education of students and appropriate classroom behavior are paramount.**

Q. How many times has she fallen asleep, according to your investigation? Once? Ten?

**Falling to sleep in a classroom is a serious matter and is similar to not supervising students at all. Since administrators don't sit in classrooms every day, they do not know the exact count. However, students and administrators have reported her sleeping in the classroom and being late to class many times. The specifics will come out in the ODE hearing and cannot be discussed publicly at this time**

- Q. Ms. Smith has a son who used to be on the Perkins Board of Education. Isn't that why the district is seemingly so reluctant to fire her?

**No, definitely not. The district is following state law and the requirements of its labor contract with the Perkins Education Association. Mrs. Smith is entitled to a fair hearing under the law. In addition, the administration and the board respect her many years of service to the district, and had hoped to come to a positive resolution of this situation.**

**Beyond that, the district is in the midst of a legal process under state law and can't talk about specific examples or specific statements of students or parents.**

- Q. Isn't Perkins running the risk of Mrs. Smith filing a lawsuit against it for ageism or other civil rights violation?

**A. The administration has reviewed the situation with our legal counsel who has advised us each step of the way. As long as the administration follows the law and the terms of the labor contract with the PEA, we are within our legal rights and working in the best interests of students and all teachers, including Ms. Smith.**

- Q. Why can't she simply retire at the end of the school year?

**A. She can. The district would prefer that she retire with its blessing and thanks. Ms. Smith would receive all her STRS benefits, including health care, which she earned over her years of distinguished service.**

- Q. Some people say she is retaliating for some discipline or incident the school district meted out against her. Is this true? Word is the union had to save her in the past.

**A. Of course not. We couldn't comment on past personnel issues anyway beyond what is on the public record.**

- A. Did the tenure system keep Ms. Smith on the job?

**While it is true the tenure system makes it more difficult to remove teachers who are not performing up to standards, Ms. Smith has served admirably for many years.**

- Q. Doesn't Ms. Smith have diabetes or some other illness that causes her to sleep in class? Couldn't some medication fix that?

**A. The administration has investigated various medical solutions to the issue and recommended some to Ms. Smith. She evidently has not pursued them or they have failed to help cure her sleepiness in class.**

- Q. Isn't the district over-reacting with the "pornography charges?" After all, I understand she never showed her 9<sup>th</sup>-grade classes the insides of either *Playboy* or *Playgirl*, but simply showed the covers to the class as examples of "yellow journalism." Kids hear worse than this all the time.
- A. **To ensure quality education for students, the district has clear standards on what teachers and students may read and discuss in the classroom. While those particular publications may not offend some families, the vast majority of Perkins families do not wish them to be in a 9<sup>th</sup>-grade classroom because of the values they espouse.**
- Q. Will the school board hold a public meeting so her many supporters can bear witness to the positive effect Carol Smith has had on their lives before the board makes its decision?
- A. **The school board holds regular meetings, where citizens may participate. But the board has no plans for such a special meeting on this situation. The district must follow the hearing and termination process prescribed by law and contract.**
- Q. With all the Facebook pages and student petitions in Ms. Smith's behalf, isn't this a PR or legal nightmare that could hurt the district for years and possibly affect school board elections?
- A. **No, the situation is being handled carefully under state law and the PEA contract. Students and parents have a right to express their opinions and some are being very creative. Education of children comes first in Perkins and that's why the Board and administration are taking careful steps to maintain effective teaching and learning in every classroom. Ms. Smith has been given many chances to improve her performance and now she is being given a fair hearing under the law. Like her students on Facebook, we appreciate her many years of service, but classroom learning must come first.**